

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 08ISLAMABAD3248, PAKISTAN'S PARLIAMENT BEGINS TERRORISM DEBATE

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08ISLAMABAD3248**.

| Reference ID | Created | Released | Classification | Origin |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 08ISLAMABAD3248 | 2008-10-13 09:43 | 2011-08-30 01:44 | CONFIDENTIAL | Embassy Islamabad |

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.spiegel.de>

VZCZCXRO4586
OO RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHIL #3248/01 2870943
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 130943Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9233
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 9238
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 8856
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3873
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0440
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 6180
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 5010
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 003248

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/13/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN'S PARLIAMENT BEGINS TERRORISM DEBATE

Classified By: CDA Jerry Feierstein, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary. The October 8-9 closed joint session of parliament convoked by President Zardari to address the security situation has been widely praised as a good first step in convincing Pakistan's elected leadership to take ownership of the fight against extremism; this effort now should be extended to reach the general public. Director General of Military Operations LtGen Pasha's briefing to the group consisted largely of graphic video and other footage demonstrating what one parliamentarian called the inhumane and anti-Islamic nature of the militants. Pasha reportedly blamed India, Russia and the UAE for supporting Baloch and Taliban militancy and defended Pakistani sovereignty against incursions by U.S. forces, but reportedly he also spoke positively about what he termed the U.S. use of drones, noting the vast majority of those killed in drone attacks were foreign fighters or Taliban.

¶2. (C) The joint session has been extended by another four days, beginning October 13 when Information Minister Sherry Rehman will present the GOP's strategy to fight extremism. The session increasingly promises to be a lively debate with the Interior, Defense, Finance and Foreign Affairs Ministers lined up to answer parliamentarians' questions. NSA Durrani shared with Charge October 10 a draft of that presentation that follows classic counter-insurgency strategy. It does say the GOP has not given the U.S. a green light to do cross-border operations, but uses that as a launching pad to attack the presence of foreign militants and their violations of Pakistani sovereignty. It goes on to call on the tribes to eject the foreigners and support the government and offers them development assistance if they come around.

¶3. (C) Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Nawaz Sharif attended the briefing but left it to his Opposition Leader Chaudhry Nisar to criticize the government, mostly on procedural terms so far, by demanding that the civilian government explain their strategy and how it differs from that of the former Musharraf government. End Summary.

¶4. (C) President Asif Zardari convoked a joint session of parliament on October 8 to be briefed by the military on the current security situation. This was the third time in Pakistan's history that a joint session of parliament was formed as a committee of the whole to hear outside testimony (the first was in 1974 to discuss religious riots; the second was in 1988 to debate whether to sign the Geneva peace accord on Afghanistan). Chief of Army Staff General Kayani attended but newly promoted LtGeneral Pasha delivered the military's brief as Director General of Military Operations (Pasha moved over to become Director of Inter-Services Intelligence on October 10).

¶5. (C) Lending a sense of urgency to the proceedings, on October 9, suicide bombers attacked an Anti-Terrorism Unit of Islamabad Police injuring a dozen and set off a roadside bomb in Dir, Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) killing 12. Also on October 9, a bearded man in a burqa was arrested at Islamabad airport on suspicion of terrorism; across Pakistan there have been numerous hoax bomb threats since the September 20 Marriott bombing. On October 10, over 60 (the death toll is still rising) members of an anti-Taliban jirga were killed in Orakzai, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and in Bajaur, FATA, the Taliban beheaded four elders of the Charmang tribe. Also on October 10, the Taliban blew up the house of another Awami National Party leader in Dir and kidnapped a nazim (mayor) in Swat, NWFP. Earlier in the week, explosions at several juice shops in Lahore were blamed, not on the Taliban, but on conservative groups reportedly seeking to discourage "immoral" behavior (the bars were allegedly trysting places for unmarried couples). These attacks followed the October 2 suicide bombing targeting Awami National Party leader Asfundyar Wali Khan in Wali Bagh, NWFP, and the October 7 attack on a Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz parliamentarian in Bhakkar, Punjab. Overall, there have been 40 suicide bombings in Pakistan so far in

¶2008.

¶6. (C) The joint session was held "in camera" without press

but parliamentarians have been providing bits and pieces of information about the briefing, which was followed by a question and answer session. The original Q&A session,

Islamabad 00003248 002 of 003

scheduled for 30 minutes, lasted over four hours. The parliament then convened in joint session on October 9 to continue questions; it agreed to meet for another four days beginning October 13, when Information Minister Sherry Rehman will brief the group on the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) strategy to tackle terrorism.

¶7. (C) xxxxxxxxxxxx that Pasha's briefing consisted in large part of videos and photos of Taliban and other terrorist organization activities that demonstrated the militants were both inhumane and un-Islamic. At several points, xxxxxxxxxxxx said female parliamentarians asked the Army to stop showing disturbing footage, including a gory beheading. Members were told that India has established nine training camps along the Afghan border, where they are training members of the Baloch Liberation Army. According to xxxxxxxxxxxx Pasha also claimed that India and the UAE (reportedly due to opposition to construction of the Gwadar port) were funding and arming the Baloch. Pasha also claimed that the Russian government was directly involved in funding/training/supporting the insurgency.

¶8. (C) xxxxxxxxxxxx said Pasha briefed members on what he termed USG drone incursions and missile strikes. According to xxxxxxxxxxxx, Pasha praised the U.S. for its support through these methods and showed statistics to parliamentarians that demonstrated the vast majority of those killed in these attacks were either foreign fighters or Taliban. xxxxxxxxxxxx believed that the military had made a good-faith effort to portray USG activities as positive. According to xxxxxxxxxxxx Pasha barely mentioned the threat from local Taliban leader, Baitullah Mehsud.

¶9. (C) Other parliamentarians at a dinner hosted October 10 by Charge for SCA/PB Director Hartley, including Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Senators Babar Awan and Enver Baig, Pakistan Muslim League Assembly member Donya Aziz, Awami National Party Senator Haji Muhammed Adeel, FATA parliamentarians Shaukat Ullah and Munir Khan Orakzai and Muttahdia Quami Movement (MQM) leader Farouq Sattar, were less impressed by Pasha's brief. They all said the brief was a good beginning, but characterized it as being largely descriptive and adding little information they did not already know. They noted that Pasha, unsurprisingly, defended Pakistan's sovereignty against U.S. incursions. They agreed that Pasha had defended Pakistan's relationship with the U.S. but did not share details from the briefing about foreign fighters killed in alleged U.S. drone attacks.

¶10. (C) Both the FATA parliamentarians and MQM said during the Q&A session they pointed out that not all terrorists were tribals and that the GOP needed to address growing extremism in the Punjab. They noted that Punjabis increasingly are moving to fight with militants in FATA and that there is growing Talibanization of Karachi.

¶11. (C) Also attending the dinner was Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Information Secretary Ahsan Iqbal. Iqbal echoed comments made publicly by PML-N Opposition Leader Chaudhry Nisar; both denigrated the briefing as being merely descriptive and called for the civilian government to explain its strategy to fight the militants. Nisar asked how the GOP's strategy differed from that of the former Musharraf government. Nisar told the press "It is noteworthy that no suicide attack had taken place before the country became an ally of the U.S. in the war on terror." PML-N leader Ishak Dar told the press that it was imperative that a joint session of parliament be apprised of all agreements executed with the U.S. Interestingly, Nawaz Sharif, who attended the joint session, did not comment on it publicly. Several newspaper editorials criticized the PML-N leaders for jumping

the gun on their criticism before the session was complete.

¶12. (C) Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam leader Fazlur Rehman at a news conference October 12 claimed his party had the vision to lead the country of the present crisis. He blamed the entire military leadership, not just former President Musharraf, and demanded they explain the agreed-upon rules of engagement with U.S./ISAF coalition forces in Afghanistan. He reiterated his view that the U.S. presence in Afghanistan was the root cause of Pakistan's problems in the tribal areas and said foreign troops must leave Afghanistan for the sake of

Islamabad 00003248 003 of 003

peace in the region. He also said his party had serious reservations about the ongoing military operations in Bajaur.

¶13. (C) The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) party and the Pukhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, both of which oppose use of force in the tribal areas, boycotted the session. JI leader Qazi Hussain has this week been leading a largely ignored "train march" to protest GOP policies in the FATA.

¶14. (C) We expect Sherry Rehman will brief the now established GOP strategy of: (1) political engagement, but not with terrorists; (2) economic development; and (3) use of force when necessary. National Security Advisor Durrani provided Charge October 10 with a draft of the GOP's presentation to the joint body, which follows classic counter-insurgency strategy. It does say the GOP has not given the U.S. a green light to do cross-border operations, but uses that as a launching pad to attack the presence of foreign militants and their violations of Pakistani sovereignty. It goes on to call on the tribes to eject the foreigners and support the government and offers them development assistance if they come around.

¶15. (C) Comment: The long-promised joint session is a welcome first step in bringing Pakistan's elected leadership on board with the government's counter-terrorism strategy. The session is being extended to accommodate a great deal of pent-up opinion and emotion that has amassed over the past few years when the leadership kept parliament in the dark on security issues. The government understandably wants to keep as much of that emotion contained in a closed-door session as possible, and surprisingly little of the briefing content has been leaked to the press. At some point, however, there needs to be a public airing of views and concerns if the GOP is going to increase public acknowledgment that this is Pakistan's war.

¶16. (C) Comment cont'd: In other welcome developments, at least one Pakistani group (perhaps bankrolled by the owner of the bombed Marriott Hotel in Islamabad), Yeh Hum Naheen (Say No to Terrorism) has been placing newspaper and TV ads in the Urdu and English language press; the group's aim is to collect the largest number of signatures ever on an anti-terrorism petition. We understand the Information Ministry is responsible for placing other anti-terrorism ads in recent days. On October 11, Information Minister Malik spoke at an anti-terrorism seminar organized in Lahore, again as part of a long-promised outreach campaign by GOP ministers. Feierstein